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SUBJECT: UNAMI DEPUTY DISCUSSES DRAWDOWN

REF: A. BAGHDAD 4422

[¶](#)B. USUN NEW YORK 2242

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel V. Speckhard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On December 12, DCM met with UN Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary-General (DSRSG) Michael von der Schulenburg to express strong concern over the signal the UN decision to draw down UNAMI's in-country staff would send and the ability of UNAMI to stay meaningfully engage with such a drastic manpower cut. Schulenburg stated that the decision had not a knee jerk reaction, but based on legitimate security concerns and open to re-evaluation if the security situation improved. Schulenburg also expressed disappointment at the rapidly eroding capacity of the Iraqi Election Commission and impact this would have on the ability to hold Provincial Elections. DCM stressed that the UN should revisit the decision, with the goal of increasing its presence as soon as possible. END SUMMARY.

UNAMI DRAW DOWN CONCERNSS

[¶](#)2. (C) On December 12, DCM Speckhard told DSRSG Schulenburg that the US mission was very concerned over the reported UN intention to significantly draw down UNAMI's staff in Iraqi (Reftel USUN 2242). Stating that this decision, if implemented, would send out a very negative signal to the international community regarding the UN's commitment to Iraq, DCM reiterated the international role and leadership the UN played through UNAMI and how important it was to remain engaged in helping Iraq. DCM expressed specific concern and questioned Schulenburg on UNAMI's ability to make an impact with such a reduced staff in key areas such as constitutional reform and national reconciliation.

[¶](#)3. (C) Schulenburg pushed back somewhat, saying that the staff adjustment was not a knee jerk reaction, but a thought out realignment. Schulenburg told DCM that the decision to reposition began to take shape after the U.S. decision to draw down staff in Basrah, "which sent a real shock to UNAMI and the UN". Reiterating that security was the driving force in the decision, Schulenburg confirmed to DCM that the lack of overhead protection in UNAMI's housing compound was the key issue, saying it would cost at least 33 million USD and possibly as much as 40 million USD to construct. Schulenburg told DCM that the UN and UNAMI remained committed to maintaining sufficient personnel in country to be fully engaged and indicated a staff of 65 would remain. (COMMENT: Previous reporting placed the ceiling at 55, see Baghdad 4422; on December 13, UNAMI contacts told PolOff that this

number was being reconsidered at HQ UN and may be raised to
¶65. END COMMENT) In response to DCM request that UNAMI ask HQ
UN to reconsider the realignment, Schulenburg said that the
manning would be re-looked at in 3-4 months and adjusted if
the security situation changed. DCM reiterated the
importance of a strong UN presence in Iraq. He urged
strongly that the UNAMI ramp up its presence to at least the
previous level soon.

UNAMI CONCERN OVER THE ELECTION COMMISSION

¶5. (C) On the subject of possible provincial elections,
Schulenburg told DCM that the difficulty the Council of
Representatives (CoR) was having in passing the Iraq High
Election Commission (IHEC) law was unforeseen. He expressed
strong concern that the current election commission was
rapidly losing capacity to hold elections and in danger of
disintegrating completely if the law was not passed soon.
DCM stated that the Embassy -- including the Ambassador --
had been very engaged in pressing the CoR in reaching a
compromise to break a deadlock over the legislation. The
Embassy expected the CoR to pass the resolution when a quorum
of MPs is present again in January.

KHALILZAD